

## PLAYING "TOM SAWYER" ON THE COLUMBIA

Our stay in Wenatchee and the state of Washington turned out to be a money maker for us with more than half the time being free to enjoy life, which we really did. We paid no rent, bought eggs cheap. Milk and bread and bacon and some cans of pork and beans were all I can remember we had to buy as we got lots of tomatoes and potatoes from our neighbor and also from a garden down by the Columbia River. We spent a lot of free time down on the river. We talked of trying to swim across but it was so wide you could barely make out people on the other side. They looked about 6" tall. From a rise above it looked like there might be some rough water and we didn't know how far down stream we would drift while trying to make it across, anyway we didn't try, but we had the best swimming area you could ever dream about. A nice sandy beach area. There was a land mass that jutted out into the river about 1/4 mile and we noticed some logs just drifted around in big circles, so we gathered up quite a few logs and tied them together and made a large raft. We used that raft the whole time we were there. Matter of fact we never saw anyone else while we were in that area. The raft would make a huge circle as the current carried it way out into the river and then back closer to shore. It took 30 to 40 minutes to make one circle. We rode some, dove off of it, and just floated to our hearts content. On the circle farthest out in the river we never could dive deep enough to touch bottom.

Besides swimming in the river, we often would hitch a ride into Wenatchee. In town we often visited the library and spent a good deal of time just reading. Then there was always a double feature movie we could take in. Matter of fact, we didn't miss very many features I'm sure. Quite often we would pass the time reading in the place where we slept. I think we got reading material from the library, not quite clear on that. I know we got some from the neighbor we worked for. Matter of fact they asked us to go to church with them on Sundays, which we did. Methodist Church no less. Our favorite thing to do when we were going to spend time reading in our place was to pick a bunch of apples, then we would peel and cut them in quarters and spread them out on a newspaper between our beds. Then we would lie on our beds, reading and eating apples. We slept on the cement floor, but we had cut a lot of wild wheat straw, which acted sort of like a mattress.

## TRESSLE TRAUMA

One day Allen and I decided to go to a fruit packing shed. As we walked towards it by walking along a railroad track, we came to a deep ravine that was a good city block wide at the top and the railroad trestle was our only way across. We certainly didn't want to meet a train on the trestle as it was very narrow and no place to go but about 200 feet down. We stopped as we could see an engine headed our way, but by the time it reached the trestle it stopped and pushed some cars off in front of the packing shed that set just on the other side of the ravine. So we started to cross by walking on the railroad ties. But here came the engine in our direction again so we hurried back, but the engine again stopped and went back. It repeated this several times spotting freight cars at the plant and moving others out. Well we decided this was going to go on for some time so we started across. We got about two-thirds across when the engine didn't stop and with its train of cars kept coming across the trestle. We knew we couldn't make it back to land and we could see there was no room for us to stand on the ties while the engine and cars passed, so we climbed over the edge and crouched down on some bracing. Even crouched down our heads were on a level with the tracks. We don't know if the train engineer saw us or not because it kept coming. The trestle shook with the weight and motion of the train. I shook, but not because the trestle was shaking and my knuckles were white as we hung onto the supports. The engine was a big steam engine and as it crept by the fire box was on a level with our heads, the heat was fierce and some steam was shooting out that added to the danger, but we were not going to turn loose and we held our position till the train passed and the trestle and both of us stopped shaking. I don't remember much about the packing shed and we did use the railroad trestle on our way back, after listening intently to make sure a train was not approaching.

We got mail by having it addressed to General Delivery at the Post Office. I had written to Velma and explained where we were living. I tried to write my folks in Texas on a regular basis so Mother especially wouldn't worry too much about me. Then I always liked to have a letter from her when we went to the post office and checked for mail.

One Friday evening Ken and the other fellow showed up at our place and asked Allen and I if we would come up to where they were staying and shoot a deer for them. They said the next day was deer season and the owner of the orchard where they were making boxes suggested they get a deer with his 22 rifle. His orchard was right up against a hill and deer always came down into the orchard. Well of course we agreed to give it a try. They could of done it as well as Allen and I , but guess we had built up a reputation and neither one of them had ever shot a deer. A 22 is not powerful enough to use on a deer, except at close range and then only in the forehead. Well it seemed ridiculous for four people to go hunting together with one 22 rifle, but we did and I

happened to be carrying the rifle at the time we came upon some deer at very close range and I dropped one right in its tracks. Washington deer are the large mule tail and this one was so big we tied it to one of the poles they were using to prop up the tree limbs. The four of us could hardly carry it and did break one pole and had to get another. We carried it across the orchard to a shed where we could hang it up and cut it up. After cutting it up we took it to the apartment where Velma and Ken were staying. Velma cooked up a large roast on Sunday for Allen and I to take back to Wenatchee. We told them we would hitch a ride back to Wenatchee which we did. Hitching a ride wasn't too hard in those days. People felt sorry for those who had to hitch and would generally pick you up if they had room. Hardly ever heard of bad things happening to those who picked up hitch hikers.

We got back to our place that Sunday evening and worked till Wednesday noon and then we were off to town. For some reason we were kinda late leaving Wenatchee, took in two double features I think. Anyway we got a ride with a truck driver. Allen was sitting in the middle and I sort of fell asleep. Allen punched me in the ribs and said, "Lets ride to Tacoma and we can look up some relatives of my Mother's." I agreed so we rode all night. I don't remember the details of how we found his relatives, but he knew their names. Anyway they seemed pleased to have us visit. One of them took us down to a sawmill where we saw acres and acres of logs floating in the water and watched them being pulled up into the saw mill. We also walked thru a place where they were cutting off and making bundles of shingles. This was a lone area upstairs where about twenty men in a row had an area where each had a part of a tree trunk cut as long as a shingle and it rested on a table which he rocked back and forth into a saw blade that sliced off the shingles. The one thing Allen and I both noticed was that every man had one or more fingers missing off his hands. Years later in Oregon, Uncle Curly Johnson took me thru a plywood factory. That was very interesting to see a huge log rotating and a thin sheet of wood being peeled off and going down a long conveyor.